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Nicaraguan Rebel Tells of Killings As Device for Forced Recruitment

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MIAMI, Sept. 11 — A former director of the largest Nicaraguan rebel group says in a court affidavit that the rebels routinely forcibly recruited new fighters by publicly killing Sandinista officials and their sympathizers in many small Nicaraguan towns.

In an affidavit to the World Court that is to be made public on Thursday, Edgar Chamorro, who was a leader of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force until last fall, said the forced recruitment was widespread and was done with the knowledge and acquiescence of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Rebel units "would arrive at an undefended village, assemble all the residents in the town square and then proceed to kill — in full view of the others — all persons working for the Nicaraguan Government, including police, local militia members, party members, health workers, teachers and farmers" on Government cooperatives, his affidavit says.

"It was easy to persuade those left alive" to join, he added. Bosco Matamoros, spokesman for the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, today called Mr. Chamorro's charges "an absolute lie" and said, "It's repugnant."

Assurance on Aid Reported

But in an interview at his home here, Mr. Chamorro said he was told of many cases of forced recruitment in the nearly two years he was with the group. Other rebel leaders have acknowledged that some of their members brutalized civilians, but they have added that anyone found guilty of that was expelled, punished or executed. Recently, rebel leaders said they had begun programs to insure that their fighters did not mistreat civilians.

Mr. Chamorro's affidavit also says two officials from the National Security Council assured the rebels 18 months ago that they would take over supervision of their military operations just after Congress voted to forbid further American aid.

The officials, identified as Lieut. Col. Oliver North and Ronald F. Lehman 2d, began meeting with the rebels in Honduras in May 1984. The two assured the rebels that "President Reagan remained committed to removing the Sandinistas from power," although he was unable to say so publicly at that time because of the impending Presidential elections, adding that the White House would "see to it that we received all the support that was necessary for that purpose," the affidavit says.

White House officials have acknowledged that Colonel North, a Marine, was involved in rebel activities and helped the rebels raise money and advised them after Congress cut off aid last year. Congress approved \$27 million in nonmilitary aid this July.

The White House would not comment on the charge about Mr. Lehman today and said Mr. Lehman was not available for comment.

The House Select Committee on Intelligence is investigating whether the N.S.C.'s involvement with the rebels violated the Congressional prohibition on aid. President Reagan and other senior officials have said the involvement did not violate either the letter or the spirit of the law, but some members of Congress disagree.

Mr. Chamorro said he was interviewed last week by the director of the General Accounting Office's national security division as part of an investigation of the C.I.A.'s role in advising the rebels how to lobby members of Congress. The G.A.O. is the investigative arm of Congress.

Mr. Chamorro gave his affidavit to Paul Reichler, a Washington attorney representing Nicaragua in its World Court case against the United States. The Reagan Administration has refused to participate in the case, saying the court does not have jurisdiction. In hearings that begin on Thursday, Nicaragua will try to prove that the rebels have been agents of the United States.

Mr. Chamorro said he remained a strong opponent of the Sandinistas. He gave the affidavit, he said, "not to help the Sandinista Government at all." He added, "But as a Nicaraguan I feel a responsibility to tell the truth to the international court."

Because of previous disclosures by Mr. Chamorro, other rebel directors voted to expel him last November.

Mr. Chamorro's affidavit says the C.I.A. gave rebel officers detailed instructions early last year about how to lobby specific members of Congress to renew aid by "placing them in a position of looking soft on Communism." One way to do that, he said C.I.A. officers told them, was "to contact certain prominent individuals in the home districts of various members of Congress as a means of bringing pressure on these members to change their votes."

The C.I.A. identified those individuals, Mr. Chamorro said, and he and the other directors frequently "participated in these lobbying activities."

Under instructions from the C.I.A. and using money supplied by the agency, Mr. Chamorro also said he and other rebel officers bribed nearly two dozen Honduran and Costa Rican journalists to write favorable news about rebels activities, paying each of them \$50 to \$100 a month.

"Our influence was extended to every major Honduran newspaper and radio and television station," he said. C.I.A. officials declined to comment on their relationship with the rebels.

Mr. Chamorro said that when Colonel North first visited the rebels just after the aid ended, he identified himself by name but not by agency, and "we thought he was from the Pentagon."